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## **‘Independent Miss Craigie’: Narration and the archive in a documentary biopic**

Lizzie Thynne

### **Abstract:**

This article explores the process of making a documentary about Jill Craigie which drew on the collection of her papers and photographs at the Women’s Library and on documents belonging to Craigie and her family. The film seeks to examine the scope and synergies of filmmaking and politics in a career which encompassed independent production, journalism, broadcasting, television and writing. Our documentary aims to evoke the tensions between Craigie’s own (rather diverse) accounts of her career, the evidence of it in her papers and in the contemporary reception of her work. This article about the making of the film provides space to reflect on how archival materials can be used to construct a narrative of a woman director’s career. In doing so, it highlights the inevitable gaps and elisions in archival sources and, indeed, in the interpretation of Craigie’s films and come to some conclusions about Craigie’s disparaging attitude to her own work in later life.

**Keywords:** 1950s film culture; Jill Craigie; *Independent Miss Craigie* (2021); practice as research; women filmmakers;

This article discusses the making of my documentary, *Independent Miss Craigie*, about the life and career of Jill Craigie (1911 – 99).<sup>1</sup> Her career provides a fascinating case study of how a woman film-maker negotiated formidable obstacles to becoming a director in the 1940s and how she addressed radical subjects for the cinema such as artists at work in *Out of Chaos* (1944), town planning in *The Way We Live* (1946) and equal pay in *To Be A Woman* (1951). Our investigations suggest, firstly, that although Craigie was not, as her publicity in

the 1940s suggested, ‘Britain’s only woman film director’ (Anon 1946: 71), she was the most photographed, making her an appealing film subject. Various extant images from the war period show her shooting on set, doing research on location and posed in various domestic and studio interiors. Secondly, the archives <sup>3</sup> reveal an intriguing split in Craigie’s identity between the young, assertive and apparently confident woman who emerges from her early letters and production documents and the older Craigie, who, in later audio and television interviews, is often dismissive of her own films. I discuss here how I evoked this split through the use of a dual narration in *Independent Miss Craigie*, in which a semi-fictionalized, first person voice-over by the young ‘Craigie’ is set in dialogue with Craigie’s own recorded speech from the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, I reflect on the connection between Craigie’s high visibility as a young woman director and her tendency, in later life, to downplay her achievements – a tendency that suggests the impact on her of the gendered hierarchies of film production.

### *Independent Miss Craigie: The film’s form*

The narrative of *Independent Miss Craigie* evolved in relation to research into Craigie’s fragmented working life which covered her acclaimed films of the 1940s, her journalism, her writing, her little-known television work, and her presence as media personality in what might be called, in that slightly euphemistic phrase, a ‘portfolio career’. It also considers how her history is inflected, like so many women’s careers in the media industries and beyond, by the intersection of the personal and the professional, including her marriage to Michael Foot MP, who became Labour Party leader from 1980-83.

Our documentary begins with an opening montage of promotional images of Craigie, on and off set. Then, a figure representing the young Jill Craigie (Mimi Haddon) is seen reviewing the contents of an old suitcase. Seated at a lighted desk, surrounded by darkness

she looks at a photograph of herself on set from her scrapbook for *Out of Chaos*.<sup>4</sup> The voice of the young Jill Craigie (Hayley Atwell) begins the narration:

My name is Jill Craigie. You may wonder why you haven't heard of me. The press said I was the first woman director of films in Britain. I got a lot of publicity – a woman in charge of 40 men, who would believe it? The continuity girl is in front – the only other woman on the unit. I was born in 1914. Well actually it was 1911 but many people of my generation lied about their age. I died at the very end of the last century.

The script introduces the theme of Craigie's striking visibility on her debut as a woman director but also questions the reliability of the narrating voice and how far it can always be taken as 'truthful'. I wanted to give this impression because Craigie did, in fact, lie about her age, for strategic reasons no doubt, both in her professional and personal life, but also because it might make the viewer wonder about the tactical, contextual and performative nature of Craigie's utterances elsewhere in the film.<sup>5</sup>

The film returns periodically to this scene of 'Craigie' going through her suitcase, as if from beyond the grave, and the set-up provides a framing device for the film and the scripted part of its narration. I had the idea for the scene after I was given a suitcase of Craigie's by Matthew Foot, Michael Foot's nephew, who remembered that he had it in his attic. The case contained among other documents: a production folder from *Out of Chaos*; yellowing copies of Craigie's television column and features for the London *Evening Standard* from the 1950s; personal letters from her second and third husband, Jeffrey Dell, and Michael Foot respectively; and from a suitor, Malcolm Macdonald (Ramsay Macdonald's son). The use of the suitcase was also suggested by other examples of women artists' work being 'discovered' in family attics – work that had not been accorded due

significance by their families because it was just something done by an aunt or mother in the distant past. Such artists include Evelyn Dunbar (see Jeffries 2015), the only salaried woman war artist (whom I discovered Craigie had approached to appear in *Out of Chaos*, but who was, for unknown reasons, not finally included) and Lee Miller the photographer, who had covered the shooting of *Out of Chaos* for *Vogue* in 1943.

*Independent Miss Craigie* is organized into eight chapters and a postscript which focus on the making of her films, as well as the intersections of her personal history, her various jobs and her film career. Chapters One is on *Out of Chaos* (1944), Chapter Four on *The Way We Live* (1946); Chapter Six on *To Be A Woman* (1951)); Chapter Five on her only feature, *Blue Scar* (1949) and the postscript on *Two Hours from London* (1995). By drawing attention to how the production, distribution and reception of each title affected the form of her films and public profile of the director herself, our documentary aims to interrogate dominant discourses about talent, creativity and authorship which underpin both the film industry and certain film histories. The fact that her two first documentaries were produced through Filippo's Del Guidice's company, Two Cities, a subsidiary of the major studio, Rank, meant, for instance, that there was a publicity machine behind her that women film-makers producing instructional and promotional films for industrial and government bodies films such as Kay Mander, Budge Cooper and Margaret Thomson did not enjoy.<sup>6</sup> Such publicity, as I argue below, was a mixed blessing for Craigie: while raising her profile, it emphasized her singularity as a woman in man's world and fetishized her exceptional beauty. The chapters on her films are interwoven with sections on her early working and personal life (Chapter Two); her lesser known work in television and script-writing (Chapter Seven) and her marriage to Michael Foot (Chapter Eight).

Recognizing that unmade projects are a significant part of any film-maker's career, especially women's,<sup>7</sup> Chapter Three, entitled 'Suffragette City', uses an orphan fragment of

Craigie's writing to dramatize her attempts to write a script about the Suffragette movement in the early 1940s in collaboration with some of its key protagonists. Having read Sylvia Pankhurst's 'fat book' on the movement (Pankhurst 1932) while working in Air Raid Protection she imagines 'a cast of the most famous film stars in the three leading parts'.<sup>8</sup> I selected clips of the following actors to represent my own fantasy cast to accompany Craigie's imaginings: Margaret Lockwood as Emmeline, Vivien Leigh as Christabel and Joan Bennett as Sylvia Pankhurst. Likewise, for the introduction to the chapter on *Blue Scar*, I dramatized a comic mock trailer which was included in a script of the film (now in the BFI National Archives) which has the name of James MacQuitty, the brother of the producer, William MacQuitty, written on the title page,<sup>9</sup>; the trailer comments ironically on the film's production in a makeshift studio, committing the sin of being both 'inexpensive and controversial' and represents Craigie, collapsed at her desk surrounded by empty bottles, copies of the script and pre-typed, blank rejection slips. James was an investor in *Blue Scar*, along with William; it was the first project to be made by Craigie and William MacQuitty's independent company, Outlook Films. The trailer humorously contextualizes the challenges faced by Craigie and her team, signalling the anxieties they felt about trying to produce a fiction film about the nationalisation of the mines with no distribution guarantee. The above examples demonstrate some of the ways in which written and visual archive are used to construct our film's narrative and evoke context; firstly, through juxtaposition of Craigie's text with footage of the British stars she might have considered for her proposed film and, secondly, through the original dramatization of an unproduced script extract from her only feature.

## The voices of the film

*Independent Miss Craigie* orchestrates two different voices for its first-person narration: Craigie's actual voice from her extant interviews from the 1980s and 1990s and a scripted narration by a young 'Craigie' performed by Hayley Atwell. The scripted narration fills in the gaps in Craigie's very partial oral accounts of her career and interrogates the older Craigie's telling of her story. In this section, I discuss the issues about story-telling raised by Craigie's interviews and how I address these in my film.

The decision to use a first-person narration in my documentary was informed by feminist film practice, including my own previous work, which has foregrounded auto/biographical modes as well as problematising them. Documentaries such as Sarah Polley's *Stories We Tell* (2013) and Alina Marazzi's *Un Ora Sole Ti Vorrei* (2003) evoke their mother's lives through contradictory archival traces and testimonies and the re-appropriation of home movies (Thynne 2018). A first-person narration which constructs Craigie as the subject of the discourse of the film seemed especially appropriate for a film which sought to represent her as a director by utilising her own papers.

My approach was also inspired by other recent biographical documentaries which avoid an expository mode in favour of more subjective and hybrid methods. Films such as Raoul Peck's *I'm Not Your Negro* (2016) which drew on James Baldwin's text on the black civil rights leaders in the US, John Akomfrah's *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013) and Liz Garbus's *What Happened Miss Simone?* (2015) juxtapose the writing and speech of their subjects with thematic archival and contemporary footage. Unlike Baldwin and Hall, Craigie was not a public intellectual but she was a very good writer with a witty, political understanding and an engaging style which she brought to her film scripts as well as to her unpublished and published texts, letters and journalism. Atwell's delivery of this narration

mimics Craigie's clipped Received Pronunciation accent in the 1940s, as can be heard from the voice-over which Craigie read herself for *Out of Chaos*. Atwell's slightly theatrical rendering underlines the semi-fictionalized status of the script and the fact that it is a performance as much as a reading.

I was able to draw extensively on two Craigie's invaluable sound interviews held by the British Entertainment Oral History project (BEHP), by Toby Haggith (1993) and Rodney Giesler (1995) respectively.<sup>10</sup> Craigie died in 1999 so these were recorded in the final years of her life and are the only substantial, professional recordings of her talking about her own work. They focus mainly on *Out of Chaos* and *The Way We Live* and lack the explicit focus on the questions of gender which drove my own interest in Craigie. By 1995, when Giesler did the final interview, these films were only ones to have been even briefly discussed in accounts of the British industry. Haggith's interview partly reflects the theme of the thesis he was researching at the time on British film and the reconstruction of the built environment (Haggith 1998).<sup>11</sup> He also succeeds in eliciting telling answers from Craigie about her education and early life, her entry into the film business, her experiences of the war and of class in the ARP and the production and reception of her first two documentaries. As he explained to me, he sought a further interview with Craigie but she was 'a bit non-committal and wasn't forthcoming about her papers'.<sup>12</sup> Giesler's briefer interview is more general in trying to elicit the broad details of Craigie's career and working relationships in her first two films for Rank.

Craigie herself does not volunteer any information to her interviewers about what she did, or tried to do after 1949 (which also happens to be the year she married Michael Foot) other than mentioning the Norman Wisdom vehicle, *Trouble in Store* (1953) script she wrote at Pinewood, after which, she says, she 'drifted away from films'. She is not asked about the discrimination she faced although she does make some asides to Haggith about the lack of



training opportunities for women directors, and about being perceived by ‘the boys’ on the shoot for *Out of Chaos* as ‘a girl, I was a girl to them anyway, I may not be allowed to say that these days, making a film about these extraordinary people’.<sup>13</sup> She also recounts some painful memories of being a young woman alone in London before her first marriage that give a revealing picture of the patriarchal culture of the city in the early 1930s where she was constantly followed and harassed by men. She says she has not spoken about these recollections before, which reframe the rather more romantic (and middle-class) portrait of the life for a young woman in the metropolis given in clips from the fiction film, *Another Day: A Symphony of London Life* (1939) which I juxtapose with Craigie’s memories.

Unfortunately, patriarchal attitudes are also manifest in Giesler’s interview, which help to underline how women remained marginalised both in the industry and in the telling of its history. At one point he states: ‘There was only you and Mary Field, and possibly a little later on, Budge Cooper. It’s quite extraordinary for you, as a young girl to have catapulted yourself into that position at that time. Were you very aggressive?’ To which Craigie retorts: ‘No I wasn’t. I was quite persuasive. And I could write . . . I wasn’t nearly aggressive enough. If you are a real artist, you sacrifice everything for your art. So, I couldn’t have been a real artist’.<sup>14</sup> Craigie’s remarks may be illuminated by understanding ‘not only the narrative offered, but also the meanings invested in it and their discursive origins’ (Summerfield 2004: 67). In her answer to Giesler’s uncomprehending question, she at first resists his aspersion, and then interprets herself as a ‘failure’ within a dominant discourse about the self-sacrificing artist rather than one which might allow her to see herself as thwarted by structural inequalities. Her feelings of failure are in tension with the other discourses she draws on in these interviews (and in other writing) in recalling the war period as one of fulfilment, providing unique opportunities for women, ‘because all women were needed. They all got jobs’.<sup>15</sup> Such a discourse is characteristic of wartime fiction films, such

as *The Gentle Sex* (1943), cited by Penny Summerfield. It is also evident in the compelling propaganda films such as Elsa Dunbar's production, *Britannia Is a Woman* (1940) made for British Movietone News, which show women in exciting and companionable work in the auxiliary services and which I juxtapose with Craigie's feelings about war work.<sup>16</sup> While this discourse of wartime equality informs Craigie's memories of being in the ARP, her passing comments in these interviews and statements elsewhere in her notes, suggest her experience of the gendered hierarchies of the film industry, which she gained entry to in the early 1940s, was somewhat different, and much more isolating. Jo Fox (2013) argues that Craigie felt that women's greater equality had made feminism unnecessary but my reading of her asides in her BEHP interviews shows that she did not feel comfortable in the male-dominated world of film, despite her allusions to the camaraderie of the ARP and to women who had found a new sense of purpose in war work. For this reason, Craigie thought such women were not then interested in feminism as a political discourse, which she herself, having newly discovered it, was.

In later interviews, Craigie frequently states she was not successful and did not know what she was doing as, for example: 'Well I got all this publicity. I wasn't very good, it was just because I was a freak, a woman in charge of 40 men'.<sup>17</sup> Her self-deprecation may not be surprising given the long gaps in her filmmaking, her dedication to Foot's political career and the channelling of much of her creativity into the marriage with him. In later life, while continuing with some journalism and her unfinished book on the suffrage movement, *Daughters of Dissent*, she spent much of her time in the role of home-maker to someone who was entirely undomesticated, as Julie Hamilton, her daughter, explains in our documentary, and other friends have corroborated; her grandson, Jason Lehel observes that 'she was in awe of him'.<sup>18</sup>

In *Independent Miss Craigie*, the voice of young ‘Craigie’ surveys the work that the director is silent about in her BEHP interviews but that demonstrates her continuing determination to make politically progressive films in an impressive variety of contexts, despite the sexism and rejection she encountered. Thus, Chapters Six and Seven of our documentary explore the production of *To Be A Woman* (1951) that was made completely outside film industry institutions and supported by crowd-funding linked to the Equal Pay campaign<sup>19</sup>; Craigie’s scripts for the commercial features *The Million Pound Note* (1954) and *Trouble in Store* followed by her unsuccessful pitch to Michael Balcon to direct for Ealing (Williams 2012); her television appearances and lobbying of the BBC from the late 1940s to the late 1960s, culminating in two documentaries made in 1967, *Who are the Vandals?* looking at the problematic design of the Regents Park housing estate, and *Keep Your Hair On!*, a quirky look at young men with long hair, exploring new masculinities. The final two chapters evoke the gender politics of her marriage to Foot and the couple’s revulsion at the renewal of ethnic cleansing in Europe by the Serbs which prompted her final film, *Two Hours from London* in 1995. None of these later phases of her career fit neatly into existing accounts of British documentary history which have heavily focused on the Documentary Movement and the cinema and therefore overlook important work, which was often made outside this context, especially by women.

### **Scripting a life**

My scripted narration is based on her papers, and builds on Carl Rollyson’s well-researched biography (2005). I utilise production records of her films and television programmes, such as those held at BBC Written Archives Caversham. These records, and the letters in her suitcase, reveal how, throughout her career, she attempted to reconcile her political ideals with her aim of addressing a wide audience, not only through inventive blends of drama and documentary, polemic and humour in the films themselves but in her energetic efforts to get

them seen through both commercial cinemas and non-theatrical venues and associations, such as the Artists International Association.

For *Blue Scar*, we draw on documents on from the National Coal Board (National Archives) to contextualize the tensions manifest in the film itself between Craigie's feminism and her socialism; between her political commitment to explore the impact of Labour's reforming nationalisations and the need to get distribution for the film on the conservative circuits in order to recoup the investment the MacQuittys had made. I show how Craigie's sympathy with the desire of the female lead, Olwen, to escape the valleys, (where nationalisation of the mines was not making much difference to the lives of women) is sacrificed to the need to celebrate the rebirth of the community which public ownership promised. The film was pitched to the NCB who provided 50% of the funding, as a project which would help recruitment by its authentic portrayal of mining. On completion, William MacQuitty then decided he had to buy out the Board since he felt the distributors would not otherwise touch a film that was so closely aligned with the NCB and therefore smacked of propaganda.<sup>20</sup> Such conflicts of interest were typical of the challenges Craigie's work faced throughout her career as she attempted to juggle Labour politics, her feminism and film industry structures.

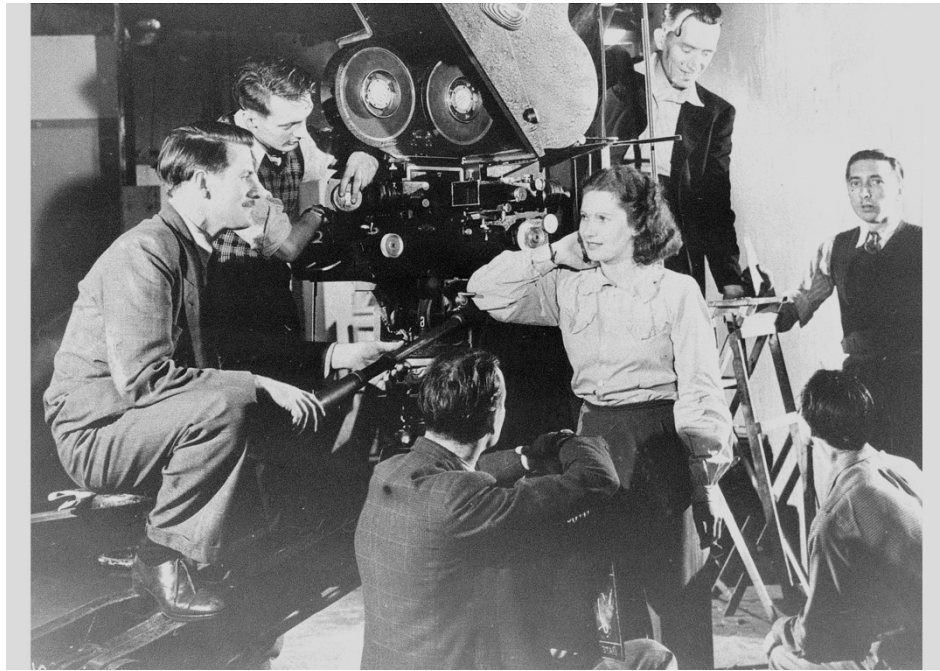
For *Out of Chaos*, I was able to elaborate on Craigie's account of the production in her interview with Haggith by citing the lengthy correspondence with the artists featured in Craigie's production folder, especially Paul Nash, Graham Sutherland, John Piper, and the 'Fireman artist', Leonard Rosoman. The production folder reveals both Craigie's determination and her extremely thorough and focused research for the film. She solicits detailed descriptions of their creative process from the artists which she plans to translate into film sequences with them. Her perspicacious approach demonstrates a keen awareness that appreciation of a work of art, especially modern art, entails focusing on the 'generative act

that brings a work into existence' (David Davies cited in Bell 2007: 96). A brief, handwritten note from Kenneth Clark says her outline is good but that he is 'not much in favour of taking part himself'<sup>21</sup>; an ironic remark since Clark later had a major role in television, becoming Chairman of the new Independent Broadcasting Authority in 1955 and a presenter and producer of arts programmes, such as the landmark, *Civilisation* series for the BBC (1969). It was an achievement for Craigie to persuade these significant, male cultural figures to co-operate; for this kind of subject, cinema was still an unfamiliar medium of which many artists at the time were suspicious.

Craigie's correspondence with Piper provides a fascinating glimpse of attitudes to documentary at the time. He withdrew from the project after reading her treatment, and I use his revealing letter in which he states that he had 'a horror of informational, instructional, or helpful films'.<sup>22</sup> He mentions that he had already appeared 'a few years ago' in a film that 'was made to advertise television' and been similarly 'horrified being an untrained simpleton in front of the camera and not an actor.' In her reply she queries Piper's conservatism and notes with characteristic sharpness, 'I deserve a halo for self-control . . . needless to say I am very disappointed that you have withdrawn your support of the film . . . as documentary records of people and their activities are being made all over the country, is it really necessary that artists should be so very exceptional in this respect? After all there will be no necessity to speak, which is usually the chief difficulty'.<sup>23</sup> Of the artists featured in *Out of Chaos*, as I show, only Henry Moore speaks, naturally and compellingly, in sync, in his studio, as he re-enacts the process of making of *Pink and Green Sleepers* (1941), using a watercolour wash to reveal the wax drawing of the sleeping figures in the Underground beneath. The sequence is a testament to Craigie's collaboration and fondly recalled, warm relationship with the sculptor, not to mention Moore's flair for self-publicity and understanding of film. However, her inclusion of the Fireman and Civil Defence artists in the

film, as well as the shots of a diverse public flocking to the National Gallery to see their work at the start of *Out of Chaos* underline her thesis that, in keeping with the democratic ethos fostered by the war, art is not only the province of the elite or the exceptional genius.

The voice that emerges from the documents, connected to her most active period of film-making, contrasts starkly with the dismissive attitude to her films which the older Craigie adopts in her interviews in the last two decades of her life. I highlight this disjunction between the older and younger Craigie in our documentary in two ways: firstly, as I have noted, through the assertive delivery of the performed narration and secondly, through a scene in which the young 'Craigie' seated typing at her desk, catches the older Craigie speaking in an interview (*Private Lives*, BBC, 15 May 1984), showing on a 1940s TV set behind her. In the interview, Craigie is invited to talk about her career. She responds with habitual self-disparagement: 'I started directing films during the war because I wanted to very badly and there weren't any other women, and I didn't know anything about it, so I don't think I was very good.' At which point the young 'Craigie' turns back sighing in frustration to continue her typing, suggesting an impatience with the apparently inexplicable self-deprecation by her older persona.



*Fig 1. Craigie on the set of Blue Scar Image courtesy of Women's Library, LSE*

### **Director as Spectacle**

Using Craigie's voice(s) extensively in our film was a way of providing a counterpoint to her specularisation as a young women director by emphasizing her as a subject rather than the object of the gaze. The publicity and press surrounding the release of *Out of Chaos* and *The Way We Live* tended to make her into a spectacle in at least two senses. Firstly, in the numerous publicity photographs of her, she was often positioned as a beautiful woman to be gazed at, posing whilst apparently on set as well as in domestic settings. (INSERT FIGURE 1) In an image taken on the set of *Blue Scar*, she is even placed at the centre of the converging gazes of the male camera crew, as she stands in front of the camera rig (Figure 1). I do not know of any contemporary male, or indeed female, British director who was photographed so much in this way, as if they were a star rather than a film-maker. This material showed how Craigie was literally made more visible as a woman figure in documentary history even while her films have not received so much attention.

The second feature of Craigie's specularisation was the way she was represented as being a woman 'out of her place', a curiosity who had somehow made it into a masculine domain. The entry of women and people of colour into the areas of cultural production normally reserved for white men, whether it be in music, film or art, has often rendered them 'spectacular' in the sense that they were, and are, often hailed as if they were the first to step onto the stage. In my opening montage, I include a soft-focus portrait of her looking off camera, taken from her scrapbook for *Out of Chaos*, in which she wryly notes: 'These were taken at the studio on the insistence of the boss, Del Guidice'.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever Craigie's reservations, it is clear that her producers and publicists wanted to capitalize on the notion of her exceptionality. One example of this, which I use in the film, is the double page feature of her from *The Sketch* (7 August 1946) (Figure 2), publicising her documentary on the plan to rebuild Plymouth, *The Way We Live*. The headline proclaims 'We take our hats off to Miss Jill Craigie for being Britain's first woman director and a first class one.' The surrounding images seek to contain this curious phenomenon in various ways, especially by showing her in the classic pose of a woman caught admiring herself in the mirror. This pose is typically used to display a woman's body and to question her narcissism at the same time - a suspect trait which is underlined by the *noirish* lighting in the bottom left image. At the same time, the caption feminises her work in film-making by making her attention to her appearance analogous with her concern for 'production details'. The whole feature embodies the conflicting discourses on femininity manifest in the war period which sought to enlist women's potential outside the home as well as maintaining gender norms. In our film, I use this feature to conclude the chapter on *The Way We Live*. Its focus on Craigie as the mistress of the bourgeois interiors of Malcolm MacDonald's house at Frognal, Hampstead, where Craigie was staying (thanks, it seems, to MacDonald's passion for her) nicely contrasts with shots from the cramped billet



inhabited by the Copperwheat family that I show from *The Way We Live*. In later life, her visual representation in the press often fixes her in another feminine position: less glamorous and in increasingly matronly attire, in a supporting role as Foot's wife on the campaign trail and at political events.



WE TAKE OFF OUR HAT TO—  
MISS JILL CRAIGIE, for being Britain's only woman film-director  
and a first-class one.

**MISS JILL CRAIGIE**, England's only woman film-director, and wife of film-maker Jeffrey Dell, has produced and directed "The Way We Live," a record of the experiences of a bombed-out family in Plymouth; a record which applies to any other bombed-out family in England. It shows English life as we really live it; a simple, well-observed, has the right sentiment about this country, without blitheness and sentimentalism. The way we live, the way we love, the way we die. The way we are. Playset extremely well by amateurs is a film of which we can all be proud. Miss Craigie also produced and wrote "Out of Chaos," an excellent record of life in England at war.



Fig 2. Feature on Craigie from *The Sketch* publicizing her work at the time of *The Way We Live*. Image courtesy of Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans Picture Library.

The counterpointing of public and private images was a method we were able to use in *Independent Miss Craigie* because we had access to scratched contact sheets of often unpublished photographs of her by her daughter, Julie Hamilton, who, with her mother's encouragement, became a press photographer in the 1950s. These strips containing unprinted images, some marked up in chinagraph pencil, served to highlight the constructedness of the public images. I use them to accompany some of the conflicts of Craigie's private life, in particular the issue of Foot's infidelity between the 1950s and late 1970s. In Hamilton's contact sheets, Craigie often appears on her feet in the background working in the kitchen or serving Foot, while he sits reading the paper and I use such images to explore the tension between her feminism and her loyal commitment to Foot, sometimes at the cost of her own ambitions.

### **Conclusion**

Near the beginning of our documentary, I have Craigie pose the question 'Why, since I was so well connected, was I not still directing films?' Our film does not propose one definitive answer to this question which, inevitably in an individual life, is inflected by all kinds of factors, and not only gender, as it was important to acknowledge. However, in reflecting on the apparent and actual tensions in Craigie's career, life and politics, I am struck by the significance of the images which drew me to her in the first place. In her scrapbook for *Out of Chaos*, we see one of the many photographs of her surrounded by an entirely male crew, except, as her note states, for the 'continuity girl'. As I have suggested, such images mark her out as 'a pioneer', as does the oft-repeated accolade in her press and publicity, 'Britain's first woman director'. Craigie no doubt benefitted in some ways from this designation of her and it was a calling card for the rest of her life. On occasion, she describes herself in this way as if she had absorbed the description even though she knew it was not true. Being presented as the exception creates high expectations that one should not only be more talented than other women, but also most men. This also explains why, in later life, she is inclined to disparage



her own achievements in creating radical and complex insights into the politics and culture of her times. The two voices I orchestrate for her in *Independent Miss Craigie* – the young, confident Craigie and the older, more ambivalent one – are in fact linked in ways I had not fully grasped until making this film .

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The film was produced at the University of Sussex. I use 'I' in relation to my role as producer and director; 'we/our' reflects the team production effort. Research Fellows Hollie

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Price and Adele Tulli did most of the archival research, helping to draft some of the script, conduct interviews, organize and assist on shoots. The remaining, predominantly female, crew included: Pascale Neuschäffer and Malgorzata Pronko (Directors of Photography), Vera Simmonds (Editor), and Chiara Cannata (Production Assistant). The is available for screening/purchase at <https://www.jillcraigiefilmpioneer.org/>

<sup>3</sup> The main archives consulted include: The Jill Craigie Collection at the Women's Library, LSE (See Tulli: 2019); private collections of Craigie's papers; BFI Special Collections; British Entertainment History Project (hereafter 'BEHP'); The National Archives (hereafter 'TNA'); British Newspaper Archive; Outlook Films Ltd, along with commercial photographic and broadcast archives, principally Getty Images and ITV archive who hold the rights to most of Craigie's films. Tasker (2021) uses these some of these archives to give an account of Craigie's position within film (and television) during her lifetime.

<sup>4</sup> *Out of Chaos* scrapbook, 7JCC/3/6/F3/8, Jill Craigie collection, LSE.

<sup>5</sup> Wearing (2021) addresses the performative and political context of Craigie's statements in relation to her documentary *To Be a Woman* (1951).

<sup>6</sup> In addition to these and others in the small group of identifiable women documentary directors, the AHRC-funded project, *A History of Women in the British Film and Television Industries, 1933-89* has foregrounded the under-researched labour of women working in below-the-line roles, such as assistant director, production assistant, continuity supervisor, negative cutter, secretary. The article by Bell (2021) in this issue is a product of the project.

<sup>7</sup> See also Shelley Cobb's blog on unmade projects in women's careers:

<https://womensfilmandtelevisionhistory.wordpress.com/2014/03/21/women-directors-and-lost-projects/> (last accessed 24 February 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Craigie, Jill, Untitled manuscript (no date), 7JCC/3/6/F3/8, Jill Craigie collection, LSE.

<sup>9</sup> Shooting script, *Blue Scar* collection, BFI Special Collections.

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<sup>10</sup> Craigie, Jill, interviews by Toby Haggith and Rodney Giesler, British Entertainment History Project, 363, 1993, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Haggith's article in this issue (2021), 'Women Documentary Filmmakers and the British Housing Movement, 1930-1946' also addresses this topic.

<sup>12</sup> Toby Haggith, personal communication, 25 March 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Craigie, Jill, interview by Toby Haggith BEHP 363, 1993; Imperial War Museum accession number: 14293/3.

<sup>14</sup> Craigie, Jill Interview by Rodney Giesler, BEHP 363, 1995

<sup>15</sup> Craigie, Jill, interview by Toby Haggith, BEHP 363, 1993; Imperial War Museum accession number: 14293/3.

<sup>16</sup> This title has no director credit but, like other World War Two propaganda films that were aimed at women, has female personnel in creative roles including Ruth Landa as co-writer and Elsa Dunbar as Producer (credited on the film as 'Supervision'). *Women at War* (1941), which I also use clips from in Chapter Three of our film, was written by Mary Webb, narrated by Janet Murrow and edited by Louise Birt.

<sup>17</sup> Craigie, Jill, interview by Toby Haggith BEHP 363, 1993; Imperial War Museum accession number: 14293/3.

<sup>18</sup> Hamilton, Julie, interview by author, 20 February, 2019; Owen, Ursula, personal communication, 4 November 2018; Lehel, Jason (2017), interview by author, 19 January, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> 'Final minutes, accounts and correspondence, relating to the Equal Pay film, 'To Be A Woman', 6EPC/02/04, Women's Library, LSE. It was the National Union of Women Teachers who ultimately underwrote the project. See Wearing (2021)'s essay in this issue.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from G.D.G. Perkins to Sir Guy Nott-Bower, 6 January 1949, COAL 27/96 Publicity film Outlook Films Ltd – The Blue Scar, July 1947-Jan 1949, TNA.

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<sup>21</sup> Letter from Kenneth Clark to Jill Craigie, c. 1943, Suitcase donated by Matthew Foot.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from John Piper to Jill Craigie, 22 April 1943, Suitcase donated by Matthew Foot.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Jill Craigie to John Piper, 14 April 1943, Suitcase donated by Matthew Foot.

<sup>24</sup> *Out of Chaos* scrapbook, 7JCC/3/6/F3/8, Jill Craigie collection, LSE.